

A Declaration of His Highness the Lord Protector,

Inviting the People of *England and Wales*, to a *Day of Solemn Fasting and Humiliation*.



He common and notorious sins so boldly and impenitently practised amongst us, notwithstanding all our Deliverances and Mercies, together with the present Rod of an Exceeding and an Unusual Drought, which hath layen upon us for some years, and still continues and increaseth upon us, threatening Famine and Mortality, are no less than the Voice of God, calling aloud in our ears to Fasting, and Mourning, and great Abasement of Soul before him.

And although the General End and Intendment of inviting to a Day of Fast, be, that all of every Condition and Quality whatever, do try and examine their heart and way more especially, according to their own Light, and in the use of such Helps and Means as the Lord in His Providence shall afford to each one, before and upon the said day of Meeting; yet finding some thoughts set seriously upon our Heart, We judged it not amiss to recommend the same to Christian Consideration, not to impose them upon any, or to confine any within the compass thereof; but leaving every man free to the Grace of God, and to the work of his Spirit, who worketh all things in the Hearts of the Sons of Men, according to the Counsel and Good Pleasure of His own Will.

It cannot be denied but that God hath vouchsafed to appear very much in working the Deliverance of the Nation from their bondage and thralldome, both Spiritual and Civil, and procuring for them a just Liberty by His own People.

Do we now walk worthy of our high Calling in humbleness and lowliness of mind, holding forth the Virtues of Christ in time of Peace, which was our strength, by the efficacy of which all our great things were accomplished in time of War?

Have we a heart prepared as willingly to communicate the said Just Freedom and Liberty to one another, as we were industrious to get it?

Do we thankfully acknowledge our mercy in the Liberty of Worshipping God in Holiness and Righteousness without fear, being delivered out of the hands of our Enemies?

Is Brotherly Love, and a Healing Spirit of that force and value amongst us that it ought?

Do we own one another more for the grace of God and for the Spiritual Regeneration, and for the Image of Christ in each other, or for our agreement with each other in this or that form, or opinion?

Do we first search for the Kingdom of Christ within us, before we seek one without us? Or do we listen to them that say concerning the coming of Christ, Lo here, and lo there?

Do we not more contend for Saints having rule in the world, than over their own hearts?

Are there not too many amongst us that cry up the Spirit, with a neglect of Love, Joy, Peace, Meekness, Patience, Goodness, Temperance, Long-suffering, Forbearance, Brotherly kindness, Charity, which are the fruits of the Spirit?

How do we carry our Selves, not only to the Churches of God, and the Saints, but towards them that are without?

Do not some of us affirm our selves to be the only true Ministry, and true Churches of Christ, and only to have the Ordinances in purity, excluding our Brethren, though of equal gifts, and having as large a Seal of their Ministry, and desiring with as much fervor and zeal to enjoy the Ordinances in their utmost purity?

Do we remember old Puritan, or rather Primitive simplicity, Self-denial, Mercy to the Poor, Uprightness, and Justice? or are we not herein put to shame by those we easily call Anti Christian or Carnal?

Hath one that we judge to be without, equal justice with one we will call a Brother?

Do we contend for the Faith once delivered unto the Saints, as the things of Faith ought to be contended for, with Love, Patience, Tenderness, Zeal, by perswasion? Or rather imposingly, proudly, carnally, provokingly, sensually, thereby prejudicing the Truth, and, whilst we are calling aloud for the propagating of the Gospel, do we not put stumbling-blocks in the way of the same, and too much endanger to make good the slander of the world in charging Profession with Faction?

For want of Circumspection and care herein, and a due regard to sincerity and uprightness, have not many apostatized, running after Fancies and Notions, listening to filthy Dreams, worshipping of Angels, and been carried by their Impulsions; and instead of contending for the Faith, and holding the form of sound words, contended against Magistracy, against Ministry, against scriptures, and against Ordinances, too much verifying the Prophecies of Peter and Jude, in these following words.

2. Pet. 2. 1. But there were false Prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false Teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

2. And many shall follow their pernicious waies, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

3. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandize of you; whose judgement now of a long time lieth not, and their damnation slumbreth not.

10. But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise Government, presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.

11. Whereas Angels which are greater in power and might bring not railing accusations against them before the Lord.

12. But these as natural Brute Beasts made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things they understand not, and shall utterly perish in their own corruption.

13. And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time: spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you.

15. Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin, beguiling unstable souls; an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children, Jude ver. 4. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

8. Likewise also these filthy Dreamers defile the flesh, despise Dominion, and speak evil of dignities.

10. But these speak evil of those things which they know not, but what they know naturally as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.

11. We unto them, for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gain-saying of Core.

12. These are spots in your feasts of Charity when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about with winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots.

13. Raging waves of the Sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

16. These are Murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts, and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having mens persons in admiration because of advantage.

19. These be they who separate themselves, sensual having, not the Spirit.

And notwithstanding all these evils, and worse, are upon, and in the midst of us, like gray hairs, here and there, and we know it not, our pride testifying to our face Hos. 7. 9, 10. and we not return to the Lord our God, nor seek him for all this, but these things are contended for, and justified under the notion of Liberty, it being too commonly said that the Magistrate hath nothing to do either in repressing, or remedying these things. We do hereby appeal to the hearts and consciences of all fearing the Lord, whether there be not as great cause as ever to lay our Mouths in the dust, and to abhor our selves before the Lord, for these abominations, whereby the eyes of his jealousy are provoked, and to seek pardon and remedy from himself of these things.

Add we to these, The resistance, hatred, and neglect of the Gospel by the generality of men, the contempt and despite done to the sincere professors of it, even for the image of Christ in them (although they have been instruments of many mercies, and of the obtaining a just freedom for the nation) The wickednesses, oaths, drunkennesses, revellings, and all manner of licentiousness, for which things sake, the Scriptures have said, that the wrath of God shall undoubtedly overtake the children of disobedience.

And lastly, the impunity of these things, through the neglect of the Magistracy, throughout the Nation, and then judge whether there be not cause, that we be called upon, and do call upon each other seriously, to lay all these things to heart, being greatly abased before the Lord for them.

Upon the serious consideration of these things, We judge it not only warrantable, but a duty, to call upon you, and our selves, to set apart time to humble our souls before the Lord, to cry unto him for broken & penitent hearts, and that he would turn away his wrath, & be reconciled to us; for the Lord he is merciful, gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and will by no means clear the guilty, who are only such as go on in their hardened and impenitent hearts, refusing the grace offered by Jesus Christ.

It is therefore hereby declared, That We, and our Council, do purpose (by the grace of God) to set apart Fryday next, being the 24. of this present March, for a day of Humiliation.

And it is hereby Ordered that timely notice be given to the Cities of London and Westminster, who (together with the out-Parishes) we doubt not, will willingly keep the same day. And that like notice be given throughout England and Wales, to have their several meetings upon the same day Fortnight; And that Copies hereof be Printed and published, to be sent to the several Parts of the Nation, to invite them unto the performance of this duty.

Given at White-Hall this 20. of March 1653.

Printed by his Highness special Commandment,

By Henry Hills and William du-Gard, Printers to His Highness the Lord Protector. 1653.